

Application No. 10/046,886
Amendment dated March 31, 2004
Reply to Office Action of November 10, 2003

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Canceled)
2. (Currently Amended) A mower according to claim 1 5,
said deck pivoting through a first pivot angle of more than about 20° when pivoted between
the extended and retracted positions.
3. (Original) A mower according to claim 2,
said first pivot angle being more than about 30°.
4. (Canceled)
5. (Currently Amended) ~~A mower according to claim 4,~~ A pull-behind mower for
cutting ground vegetation, said mower comprising:
a frame presenting a fore end, an aft end, and a pair of laterally spaced sides;

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a hitch assembly coupled to the frame proximate the fore end and adapted to couple the frame to a vehicle;

a pair of laterally spaced wheels coupled to the frame proximate the aft end and adapted to rollingly support the frame on the ground;

a mowing deck pivotally coupled to the frame proximate the fore end and operable to cut the vegetation when positioned proximate the ground, said deck being pivotable relative to the frame between a retracted position wherein the deck is positioned primarily between the laterally spaced sides and between the fore and aft ends, and an extended position wherein the deck is positioned primarily outside the laterally spaced sides;

a motor rigidly coupled to the frame and drivingly connected to the mowing deck, so as to independently power the deck; and

a biasing mechanism for biasing the deck towards the extended position;

said biasing mechanism including a torque element rigidly coupled to and extending from the support arm and a spring coupled between the torque element and the frame, said torque element presenting a proximal end coupled to the support arm and a distal end coupled to the spring.

6. (Currently Amended) A mower according to claim 1 5;

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said motor coupled to the frame proximate one of said sides and the fore end, said mowing deck being coupled to the frame proximate the other of said sides, said motor powering the deck.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A mower according to claim 8 12,
said first pivot axis being generally upright.

10. (Currently Amended) A mower according to claim 8 12,
said deck pivoting through a first pivot angle of more than about 20° when pivoted between
the extended and retracted positions,
said deck pivoting through a second pivot angle of more than about 30° when pivoted
between the engaged and disengaged position.

11. (Canceled)

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12. (Currently Amended) ~~A mower according to claim 11;~~ A pull-behind mower
for cutting ground vegetation, said mower comprising:

a frame adapted to be coupled to a vehicle and rollingly supported on the ground;

a motor rigidly coupled to the frame;

a mowing deck coupled to the frame for pivotal movement relative to the frame on first and
second intersecting pivot axes;

a drive train for drivingly coupling the motor to the deck so that the motor powers the deck,
said drive train including a U-joint that is centered proximate to the intersection of the pivot
axes,

said deck being pivotable relative to the frame on the first pivot axis between a retracted
position and an extended position,

said deck being pivotable relative to the frame on the second pivot axis between an engaged
position and a disengaged position,

said first and second pivot axes being at least substantially perpendicular to one another; and
a support arm coupled between the frame and the deck and operable to at least partly support
the deck relative to the frame,

said support arm providing for the pivoting of the deck between the extended and retracted
positions and the pivoting of the deck between the engaged and disengaged positions,

said arm including a frame-side section rotatably coupled to the frame and a deck-side
section rigidly coupled to the deck,

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said frame-side section and said deck-side section being hingedly intercoupled.

13. (Previously Amended) A mower according to claim 12,
said frame-side section being rotatable relative to the frame on the first pivot axis,
said deck-side section being pivotable relative to the frame-side section on the second pivot
axis.

14. (Original) A mower according to claim 13, and
a hinge for coupling the frame-side section and the deck-side section,
said hinge providing for pivotal movement of the deck-side section relative to the frame-side
section on the second pivot axis.

15. (Currently Amended) ~~A mower according to claim 7;~~ A pull-behind mower
for cutting ground vegetation, said mower comprising:

a frame adapted to be coupled to a vehicle and rollingly supported on the ground;

a motor rigidly coupled to the frame;

a mowing deck coupled to the frame for pivotal movement relative to the frame on first and
second intersecting pivot axes; and

a drive train for drivingly coupling the motor to the deck so that the motor powers the deck,

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said drive train including a U-joint that is centered proximate to the intersection of the pivot axes;

said drive train including a drive shaft, an upper drive belt drivingly connecting the motor and the drive shaft, and a lower drive belt drivingly connecting the drive shaft and the mowing deck,

said drive shaft including the U-joint.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A mower according to claim ~~16~~ 25,

said deck pivoting through a second pivot angle of more than about 30° when pivoted between the engaged and disengaged position.

18. (Original) A mower according to claim 17,

said second pivot angle being more than about 45°.

19. (Currently Amended) A mower according to claim ~~16~~ 25; and

a plurality of casters rotatably coupled to the deck and operable to at least partly support the deck on the ground when the deck is in the engaged position,

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said casters being removed from contact with the ground when the deck is in disengaged position.

20. (Currently Amended) A mower according to claim ~~16~~ 25,
said deck being pivotable relative to the frame on the first pivot axis between an
extended and retracted position,
said first pivot axis being generally upright,
said second pivot axis being at least substantially perpendicular to the first pivot axis.

21. (Original) A mower according to claim 20,
said deck pivoting through a first pivot angle of more than about 20° when pivoted between
the extended and retracted positions.

22. (Original) A mower according to claim 21,
said first angle being more than about 30°.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

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25. (Currently Amended) ~~A mower according to claim 24,~~ A pull-behind mower
for cutting ground vegetation, said mower comprising:

a frame adapted to be coupled to a vehicle and rollingly supported on the ground; and
a mowing deck coupled to the frame and operable to cut the vegetation when the deck is in
an engaged position proximate the ground,
said deck being pivotable relative to the frame on first and second distinct and intersecting
pivot axes,
said deck being selectively pivotable on the second pivot axes between the engaged position
and a disengaged position when the deck is pivoted upward away from the ground,
said deck being lockable in the disengaged position;
a motor coupled to the frame and providing power to the deck; and
a drive train for drivingly coupling the motor to the deck so that the motor powers the deck,
said drive train including a drive shaft,
at least a portion of said drive shaft being independently rotatable relative to the frame and
the deck on the first pivot axis,
said first and second pivot axes intersecting one another,
said drive shaft including a U-joint,
said U-joint being at least substantially centered on the intersection of the first and second
pivot axes.

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26. (Original) A mower according to claim 25; and
an upper drive belt drivingly connecting the motor and the drive shaft; and a lower drive belt
drivingly connecting the drive shaft and the deck.